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In Memoriam.

George Rogers Rosseter, LL. D.

MEMORIAL

——OF——

Professor George R. Rosseter, LL. D.,

WHO DIED AT MARIETTA, OHIO,

JULY 27TH, 1882.

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Biographical Sketch.

GEORGE ROGERS ROSSETER was the son of Rev. Dudley D. Rosseter and the sixth in descent from Edward Rosseter, of Plymouth, England, one of the first settlers of Dorchester, Mass. He was born in Boston, Mass., Feb. 8th, 1824. In his tenth year he was in attendance at the Boston Latin School, when in 1835, the removal of his father's family to the West brought him to Madison, Indiana. Here he was prepared for College during a residence of four years. It was in the last year of this residence that he made a profession of religion, uniting with the Presbyterian Church in Madison in 1838.

In the Fall of 1839 he entered College at Marietta, Ohio, where he graduated, with the second honor, in the class of 1843.

Though but eighteen years old at this time, he was offered a situation as teacher in an Academy in Lowndes Co., Mississippi, which he accepted; but so precarious was the existence of such institutions in the South in those days, and so slow and uncertain the means of travel, that by the time he reached the place the so-called Academy was no more. In its place, however, a select school was extemporized which he taught for the next two years with decided success, gaining valuable experience of Southern plantation life.

In 1845 he returned to the North and accepted the position of tutor in Marietta College, holding it for two years. At the end of this time, having decided upon the work of the ministry, he went to Lane Theological Seminary at Cincinnati, entering the Middle Class. On finishing his Theological Course in 1849, he was licensed to preach, but in that Summer was appointed Associate Professor of Mathematics in Marietta College, in which capacity he served two years. In 1849 he was married to Miss Elizabeth P. Clark, of Danbury, Connecticut. In 1851 he went to Buffalo, West Virginia, where he established an Academy and by his personal popularity and great efficiency as a teacher made it very prosperous. These years he afterwards often spoke of as among the happiest and most fruitful of his life. But at the end of three years he was persuaded to remove to Marietta, and establish a Young Ladies' Boarding School. A number of pupils from his school in Virginia came with him to Marietta, and his popularity in the former school

continued to furnish him with Virginia pupils. His school in Marietta was broken up in 1858 by a fire which destroyed the building, furniture and library.

During the next four years he was a member of the firm of Dana, Rosseter & Co., manufacturers of Furniture.

In the last of these years he was afflicted by the loss of his wife, who died in March, 1861, leaving three sons.

He returned to the work of teaching in 1862, having charge of the Marietta High School till 1864, when he accepted the position of Principal of the Preparatory Department of Marietta College. In this position, as always, he was quite successful, showing especially his rare gifts as a teacher and manager of boys. Under his administration the Academy attained an unusual degree of prosperity, so that when in 1868, after four years of service in this department, a professor of Mathematics was wanted in the College, he was wisely chosen to fill the chair. Here for the next fourteen years Professor Rosseter did that work which made him most known and for which he will be longest remembered, the work of a teacher of Mathematics and a guide and inspirer and sympathizing friend of College students.

In January, 1867, he was married to Miss Harriet M. Webster, of Portland, Maine, who, with one daughter and the three sons before mentioned, survives him.

Professor Rosseter was a member of the Congregational Church in Marietta from 1839 until his death, a period of forty-three years, holding the office of deacon in the same for the last seventeen years and that of clerk for nearly as long a period. Of the various other offices in which he was laborious and useful to the community, it is not necessary to speak in detail; but it is pleasant to remember that, though a scholar and not a politician, his knowledge of public affairs and his public spirit, with his personal popularity, made him, without his seeking it, a prominent candidate in 1874 before the Congressional Convention of his district, lacking but a few votes of the nomination.

The degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred on him in 1881 by Western Reserve College.

Professor Rosseter's death was sudden. Though he had not been well for some weeks, the sickness which proved fatal was of only four days' continuance, resisting from the first all remedies. He died at his home in Marietta on the morning of July 27th, 1882. His death cast a gloom over the entire community, such as is seldom witnessed, and came as a shock to a great circle of friends and pupils scattered over the world.

TRIBUTE FROM ONE OF HIS ASSOCIATES IN THE FACULTY AT MARIETTA.

In looking back at this life so long identified with that of Marietta College and so abruptly ended, reflections crowd upon us and memories of the deepest interest. It is fitting that we speak of some features of the character and work of such a man, that we may not only utter our feelings under the loss, but gather lessons for our own lives.

Professor Rosseter was a man called of God and of men to the work in which he spent his life. While he was so versatile that he would have adapted himself to almost any occupation, there can be no doubt in the mind of any one familiar with his career that in choosing the life of a teacher he found his true vocation. He was not only a student but a natural expounder of truth. God gives to a favored few the ardor and aptness for knowledge necessary for high scholarship, to another favored class a special gift of expression, and to one among ten thousand that combination of these gifts with tact and wealth of illustration which makes him a messenger of truth to his fellows. When such a man finds his way into the professor's chair "the eternal purpose" finds a happy fulfillment.

Joined with these gifts was that of enthusiasm for instruction, such as was fitted to inspire in others enthusiasm for study. The students of Marietta in the last fourteen years have found Mathematics no skeleton of abstractions, but a body of living truth, fresh and fair as a daughter of Heaven. Tested by the amount and quality of willing labor secured from his pupils, Professor Rosseter's efficiency in his department was very great. The only criticism made upon his work was the occasional question whether he might not stimulate his pupils to such a degree that his department should secure an undue proportion of their time.

And this suggests one of the practical lessons of his life; the power of a kindly spirit joined to a pleasing address. While facile speech is a gift, sensitive fellow-feeling is a grace; and it is when this grace of the heart warms the gifted tongue that speech glows and flashes with its most sacred fire. It was not of Demosthenes the thunderer but of Xenophon the charmer that the ancients said, "Some goddess of persuasion sat on his lips." Our lamented Rosseter was a dispenser of "sweetness and light." His was the influence not of occasional great speeches, but of the habitual happy utterance, the golden tongue of the every-day orator whose speeches

were the natural overflow of mind and heart, the charm of the class room and the delight of the social circle. This is a kind of eloquence that is not printed and laid upon the shelf, but enters into the life of the circle in which the speaker moves; in the case of our lamented friend, it was an illumination and an inspiration in the entire college community, no more to be lost on the generation of young minds into which it has entered than the genial sunlight of a June day can be lost on the growing corn. The gain of such speech is both positive and negative; no saying of our departed friend ever left a wound, his keenest sallies carried no sting; his very rebukes were pleasant, and the discipline he administered was often the more effective for its kindness.

Another lesson from his life is the possibility and the gain of combining the spirit of conciliation with fidelity to strong convictions. He was a peace-maker both by instinct and on principle, disposed to conciliation and to compromise; but he was not a trimmer, he would yield personal preference or advantage, but not truth or righteousness. A student or citizen who came into collision with him in a matter which involved important principles or public interests felt an antagonist of gloved hand but of strong, unyielding grip.

There was a close affinity here between his disposition and his intellectual character; he had a way of seeing a principle of unity in diverse opinions and thus of grasping the larger truth which is so often distorted by both sides in controversy. It is possible to go too far in this harmonizing of extremes and this may have been his danger; but it is a rare and magnificent error, if error it be; there are enough who will err in the opposite direction. If any thought our friend latitudinarian, they did not know the man. He knew the difference between radicalism and the well founded faith in human progress; the difference between a blind conservatism and the wise building of the better future upon the foundation of the past. The death of such a man is always a public calamity; but never more so than at this time of sharp antagonism between the old and the new. Our friend did something and, if he had lived, would have done more to prove to those who need proof, that the extremist is not the only man who has clear and strong convictions; but that one of the mightiest faiths of the best minds is faith in the largeness and manifoldness of the truth.

This largeness of spirit was one of the qualities that made him so valued by his associates in the College Faculty. It not only made him a delightful companion and a fellow-laborer with whom we all could work in harmony, but gave him that wisdom which generally waits upon conciliation and generosity. Many times his dispassionate judgment and happy inventiveness, both born of his large heart,

have helped us over hard places. We had scarcely buried him from our sight before we began to want to consult him and to turn this way and that, at a loss how to go on without him. As regards personal feeling, no one of his associates stood in any fear of offending him: we always knew that he would not misunderstand us, but would give a generous interpretation to every word and action.

There is also a lesson for us in the religious life of the deceased Professor. It was not conventional but individual and thus had the stamp of genuineness; it was in harmony with all the other elements of his life. Some men's piety is obtrusive, that of others reluctant and half ashamed; his was neither, but, like himself, modest, natural, constant and fearless. Beginning in his boyhood, it was a deep and quiet stream flowing through the field of his life, without cataracts or shallows, keeping his spirit fresh and genial, and not greatly dependent on the season. Its springs were in God. He saw the Divine Spirit everywhere. Even mathematical relations were to him thoughts of God, and Astronomy was almost a branch of Theology. His students will never forget the enthusiasm which used to carry him along when, in the spirit of Kepler and Newton, he talked of God's handiwork in the heavens.

But the beloved teacher and devout scholar has been taken up to complete his studies in a higher school, free from the narrow conditions that confine us here. The invitation came to him suddenly, in vacation time, when his pupils and nearly all his colleagues were far from him. There could be no farewells or last advice to those who expected to sit again at his feet when the term should open. But the true man of God is always ready for his summons; and he who daily lives for eternity is speaking his farewells all the time and uttering his best advice in his deeds.

A TRIBUTE FROM A FORMER PUPIL AND INMATE OF HIS FAMILY.

It is not often that one life leaves a richer legacy than that of him who was lately taken away. And in thinking of him, upon whichever one of its many sides we view his life, one thought seems to absorb all others; it is the thought of how one principle pervaded his whole life and how beautiful that principle was; beautiful because it was divine, the principle of Christ. It was given to him to realize more fully than almost any one whom we have known that which Christ affirmed to be the fulfilling of the whole law—namely, a service of love to God and to his fellow-man. Obedience to this commandment of loving service, so comprehensive in its scope, entered into all the activities of his life; in it they were all summed up. Whether we think of him as teaching great truths with such a remarkable force and clearness, or doing some little act of kindness to any child he met upon the street, we see but different aspects of the same principle of love. It was this that made him so faithful, so helpful, so noble as a Christian, as a teacher, as a citizen, as a friend, as a father, and won him the love, respect and admiration so widely and deeply given him.

While all would join with love in testifying to the truth of what has been said as to the ruling principle of his life, it is more difficult for a friend and admirer to write in detail of his character and work, lest what is said should be too warmly colored by personal feeling; but one to whom he was so much may be allowed to say something of what he has seen and loved in him.

His life always seemed to me to belong to the realm of truth. One chief characteristic of his mind was a comprehensive grasp of truth, and yet his grasp was of that sort which is given by an experience of the truth. That intuition for which he was so remarkable, which seemed to single out truth wherever found; how much was it a mental gift, and how much that insight which is given to "large-eyed faith?" Some natures, like his, seem to have an especial kinship with the truth and a consequent affinity for it. To his mind it was not fettered to the time and the place in which it appeared, nor divided up as it is to smaller minds, but recognized as a manifestation, a part of the realm of truth in which he lived.

This was true even of the department in which he taught, and without doubt contributed largely to his success as a teacher of mathematical laws and principles. But whether he was in the Mathematical room or in his Bible-class, in the public meeting of the citizens or in the associations of daily life, there was the same masterly comprehension of truth, the same breadth and beauty of statement.

For his special work, he seemed to possess a genius which peculiarly fitted him to be a teacher of Mathematics. While he taught with a logical power and precision which gave to his studies their full usefulness as mental discipline, he also gave these principles a reality in the minds of his students by associating them with the external world. Of the world, in its regulative ideas of measure, design and beauty, he himself was ever as deep a student as he was of books; but to him these principles were God's expression of truth, and therefore they never lost their symbolism or their freshness. In the creation he did not lose sight of the Creator, nor did he lose any of the beauty of nature because, with a mathematical mind, he saw law and order and distinct measurements among its forms; and he delighted in leading the minds about him, through the laws and harmonies of the Universe, up to the Creator and Preserver of all.

There was in him a most rare combination of logical and imaginative power. He made all truth stand out as living truth before our eyes, and made us feel that we were not only in the class-room, but that all around us was the domain of universal truth. His inspiration for his work showed itself in his earnestness, his methods and the diversified interest he gave to the recitation by means of illustration and parallel truths, which won attention from the dullest of us. Many of his illustrations will linger long in the minds of those who heard him. Those who recall "the Genius imprisoned in the bottle" will feel that they have been present at a transformation scene as wonderful as that of the Arabian tale; and those who remember with a loving smile "the mathematical tool-box" so often mentioned, will think also that it belonged to a workman worthy of the great workshop of the universe.

All present acknowledged the Master, and felt that there was a throne in that recitation room. The erect figure crowned with the large, well poised head and its turbulent waves of hair, was typical of the man, and will not soon be forgotten by those who go back there to find that his voice is no longer heard in the familiar room. How many who have listened there felt the pang when the sudden news came that he was dead! How many went back in memory to College days in which he was a prominent and well-beloved figure!

One of the pleasantest memories of the writer is an instance

that shows what he was to the affections of those who had been his scholars, many of whom had been separated from him for years.— The occasion was the annual meeting in 1879 of the Marietta College Club of Cincinnati. Being delayed until evening he did not arrive until the dinner had begun, but as he walked down the hall all rose from their seats while the walls rang with such hearty applause as is seldom given for a welcome. It was something to be remembered by one who saw it. It was indeed the man behind the teacher that wrought the most lasting good. One of his old scholars has written: "In time we shall forget the mathematics he taught us, but his influence we can never lose."

The results of his original work, though incorporated in his teaching, remain only in the contents of countless papers, and it is probable that they can never be given more definite form. He was methodical and full in his records of study, but they had never been arranged with a view to their being published. He was twice asked by a leading book-firm of Cincinnati to write for them a series of mathematical text-books, but he felt that his other duties would not allow him to do so. Much as we may wish that this had been possible, we cannot see how he could do more than he did, nor how his time could have been better or more conscientiously employed.

What has been said before is equally true of him in the church with which he was connected so many years. The love of God and of His truth made him faithful here as he was faithful elsewhere.— His far-reaching views of the truth, united with a deep experience of it, gave him a conception of and a membership in the Kingdom of God upon earth which constituted him a leader and a counsellor.— This also made it impossible for him to be narrow, and gave him a tolerance and a charity whose better name is love. The Church will deeply feel the loss of his labors in counsel, in the strong, hopeful words of the prayer-meeting which have helped so many, or in the Bible-class where he taught as earnestly as we have seen that he taught elsewhere. He seemed to possess equal qualification for the teaching of Scripture. His interpretations, strong and vivid, brought Old Testament life and law clearly before the student, and no less fully and beautifully made known the life of Christ and the law of love as it is found in the New Testament.

It is a common charge against scholars that they withdraw themselves entirely from public life, and especially that they take no interest in the affairs of their own community. But it would be difficult to find a better citizen of the country and of the town in which he lived, than Professor Rosseter. This did not consist alone in the integrity of his example, but also in the service he was able and willing to render. It is a mark of his power as well as of his many-sided nature, that, while he had a special work so ably per-

formed, he could also enter with such energy into other activities. Faithful as a student he certainly was, with a mind ever eager in its search for truth, and apparently needing little rest in order to maintain its great activity. Yet his was a life not hidden from men. As far as was possible, it was lived among them for their upbuilding. And he was one whom men seemed instinctively to trust; one to whom they appealed for help and advice in matter of all kinds.—Being continually well informed upon national issues, he presented them in the social gathering and occasionally at public meetings in his own clear, forcible manner. His knowledge of political philosophy was more than ample for a private citizen, and even for an educated man. His interest in it was a part of his love for truth and here again prevented narrowness of view. It was this that often won the approval of those that heard him. He had a strong love of justice and interest in its administration; so strong that he was more quickly stirred by an infringement of it, whether large or small, than by anything that affected himself. He took pride in the historical interest of the town in which he lived and had an attachment to the place and people which made him faithful to its advantage at all times. Not infrequently he was asked to preside at the citizens' meetings, and was listened to with an attention which proved the worth of his words in the mind of his audiences.

He was one of the foremost members of the Literary Club of the town, and was a favorite both in its wide field of discussion and in its social life. Marked not less by a graceful manner and happy faculty of address, than by his careful and logical train of thought, he seemed to throw a charm about discussion which was even profound. But he had such geniality and true sympathy that he never shone at the expense of others. As one has well said of him, he was ever ready to draw out others, to help them in embarrassment and had the rare faculty of making them talk and appear to the best advantage.

Thus he was beloved both as a citizen and as a friend. His was a large nature; one in which suspicion and kindred littleness found small place; a nature that kept its freshness because its springs were continually renewed at the Fountain Head, and which had much of that purity and simplicity, that large faith in all things good, that trust in men and in God, which remind of the Savior's bidding to become as little children.

The words of sorrow spoken and written after his death, and the feeling that was deeper than words gave the fullest testimony to the place he had held in so many hearts. It would have been a sufficient revelation of the man to one who had not known him. But it was the simplest justice that those of whom he had spoken well should speak well of him. It was his constant habit to oppose a word of

praise to any word of blame which was spoken of another; and the more general was the condemnation of a character, the more he strove to find some good in it. He always stood on the side of the weak and unfortunate, and had a good word to say for them and to them. This, which was but a fulfilling of the commandment, "Judge not," was one of the noblest traits of his character. It is a fullness of the spirit of love which is not often attained even by good men. Indeed the thought has come to me many times that his very faults might all be included in a largeness of love which made him too lenient and generous.

As an instance of what is meant, it may be mentioned, that of the many who came to beg, none were turned empty-handed from his door, even though he had little to give. The members of the family would often smile at his inability to refuse at such times, though with a warm feeling in their hearts, and argue that he might be doing a positive harm. But he would always reply with a half smile at himself, that if he could not judge fully the merits of the case, and there must be a mistake, he wished it to be on that side and not on the other.

We cannot tell how many he has helped, but he was constantly helping some one who was drawn to him not more by his ability than by his willingness to aid all whom he could. Beside the great service of the main activities of his life, we have the beautiful thought that so many can remember him for some act of love which he did for them individually. Some of us are treasuring a multitude of these.

But those who have known him in his home life feel that they have the deepest insight into his character, into its founts of feeling and all that was good and holy in it. To him home seemed truly to be the center of the universe; separation from it or its members was one of his greatest trials, filled with anxious hours. And he did not merely receive; he made it a home. No one but those who were the very nearest to him knew this better than the one who writes these words and who feels that he was given there that which he can never forget or repay. It must be the proof of every true man that he keeps the best of all he is and does for his home-life. He did not lead two lives—the one for the world and the other for his home—but to supply that life he seemed to draw from even deeper wells than he did elsewhere. He gave to his home more of love, of thought, care and exertion. His love seemed to surround those dear to him with a constant protection and a regard for their wants. The results of his work outside were brought, in a practical and helpful form, to them. The choicest selections of his reading or thought were reserved for them. He was continually giving stimulating thoughts which were seeds of intellectual or moral life. His con-

versation, so full of life in its humor and intelligence, was never more enjoyable than when he was alone with his family. His well-known courtesy showed its sincerity in extending to the youngest and most intimate members of the family. A sympathy with the hopes and plans and all the life of the young strengthened the bond of love between him and his children. In all the affairs of their lives his counsel was the final word, and his own life continually the the most forcible lesson in those things which make true manhood. He never forgot the fact that he had been young; in fact his heart was one which kept its growth untouched by years.

Even this short sketch may give an idea of that home-life in which it was his greatest enjoyment to spend his moments of leisure. Many others came to enjoy it and to carry away memories of its love and brightness. It was a charmed circle to those who entered it. But to him it was the brightest and best spot on earth, made so not only by his own efforts but by those who loved him.— It must have been a reason for thankfulness to him in that last hour that he died there surrounded and ministered to by those who were dearest to him. But the light that was quenched when he was taken away, seemed to leave there, at first, only darkness and desolation.

We have in his life the picture of a man who was naturally great and gifted; the channels of whose thought were broad and whose action natural endowment would continually lead in large lines; one, moreover, who seemed to have a special intuition for seeing, and inspiration for speaking truth. We cannot say how much of fame he could have gotten if he had chosen to center his interests in himself. But he did not so conceive greatness. The service that he rendered was marked in many ways, but the spirit which governed it all could make even a small action of more worth than some achievements, which, without that spirit, have attracted the attention of the many.

In what has been written the word *faithful* often occurs. We may say that he was faithful to God, and in this to his conception of life, to his fellow-men, to the talents which had been entrusted to him, to all the relations of life in which God had placed him. It was a life that went forth bearing burdens of which few knew, to do the full work of faithfulness. In those last days he said, in words that come to us so full of meaning, containing the years of endeavor, that he had been "loyal to Christ." Thus humbly does the true heart, when the end has come, lay its work at the Master's feet. Is it not in such lives that we get new views of Christ? Yet some would estimate this life as comparatively small, and of little account, because it gained little of reputation or of wealth from this world. How differently it appears when measured by the principle of great-

ness which God has established, and the only one that shall abide in that never-ending life to come. So large a part of the world is striving in the opposite direction; they rush by these lives heedless of their teaching. But after the short struggle is over, and the "shadows flee away," how our eyes will be opened to the eternal truth.

Let us be thankful that the teaching is received by some whom it is able to bless; that his influence may live on in the lives of those who have known him. "He being dead yet speaketh."

Good words and deeds cannot die. They are as immortal in their influence as is the lustre which they give to the "crown of life." His was a life whose excellence and rank was such that we may rejoice in it without envy and take its lessons earnestly and humbly to our hearts. The legacy of a good life must be that the world is so much better for its having been lived. Its results must be measured by the degree in which it has helped men in whatever way, time and place.

Remembering this, I do not hesitate to add here the lines which he himself pointed out to me when they were first written:

"Were a star quenched on high,
For ages would its light,
Still traveling downward from the sky,
Shine on our mortal sight.
So when a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men."

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